

United States Patent Application for

**FULL COLOR TRANSFLECTIVE CHOLESTERIC LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY WITH SLANT REFLECTORS
ABOVE TRANSMISSIVE PIXELS**

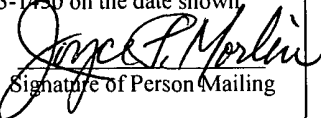
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**FULL COLOR TRANSFLECTIVE CHOLESTERIC LIQUID CRYSTAL
DISPLAY WITH SLANT REFLECTORS ABOVE TRANSMISSIVE PIXELS**

This invention claims the benefit of priority to U.S. Provisional Application No.

5 60/399218 filed July 29, 2002.

FIELD OF INVENTION

This invention relates to transflective liquid crystal displays (LCDs) and in particular to methods and apparatus for providing full color cholesteric displays using high
10 birefringence LC materials with color filtering processes.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR ART

The transmission-type liquid crystal display (LCD) exhibits a high contrast ratio and good color saturation. However, its power consumption is high due to the need of a
15 backlight. At bright ambient, the display could be washed out completely. On the other hand, a reflective LCD is using ambient light for reading displayed images. Since it does not require a backlight, its power consumption is reduced significantly.

Reflective cholesteric liquid crystal display (Ch-LCD) is a bistable device. Once the LC directors are reoriented, they stay. Thus, Ch-LCD consumes less power than the
20 general reflective twisted nematic (TN) LCD, super-twisted nematic (STN) LCD or thin film transistor (TFT) LCD. Due to its bistability, the driving voltage is required only when a user wants to refresh the screen. This power-saving feature is especially important for reading books or magazines. An ordinary person may take 2-3 minutes to finish reading a page. Thus, Ch-LCD is a strong contender for electronic newspaper or books.

25 The operating principle of reflective cholesteric display is shown in Fig. 1(a) and Fig. 1(b). Fig. 1(a) shows the bright state of a Ch-LCD wherein the cholesteric LC molecules 10 are arranged in layers with the helical axes perpendicular to top substrate 17

and bottom substrate **18**. When an unpolarized light **11** is incident to a right-hand cholesteric LC layer **12**, the right-hand circularly polarized light **13** within the bandwidth is reflected and the transmitted left-hand circularly polarized light **14** is absorbed by the absorption layer **15**, which can be black paint. In a high voltage state as shown in Fig.

5 1(b), the cholesteric LC layer was driven into a focal conic state **16** wherein the LC molecules are almost aligned with the helical axes parallel to top substrate **17** and bottom substrate **18**. Thus, the incident light passes through the LC layer and is absorbed by the absorption layer **15**, resulting in a dark state.

However, at dark ambient, a reflective LCD loses its visibility. To enable a
10 reflective display to be usable for dark ambient, a transflective display has been invented. In a transflective display, illustrated in Fig. 2, each pixel **20**, having a single cell gap **25**, is divided into transmissive **21** and reflective **22** portions, sometimes called sub-pixels. The transflective display is the most versatile because it works great in well-lighted and poorly lighted environments. However, cholesteric displays are not workable on such
15 transflective structure. As Fig. 3(a) shows, unpolarized light **30** is reflected **32** and unpolarized backlight **31** is transmitted **33** in each sub-pixel, resulting in a bright state when no voltage is applied. Such display lacks a dark state. In Fig. 3(b), the ambient light **34** is absorbed in the reflective portion **35** of the sub-pixel. However, the backlight **36** transmits through the transmissive portion **37** of the sub-pixel. Thus, the transmissive
20 portion has no dark state, with the voltage on or off.

Cholesteric liquid crystal is known to possess memory effects. Thus, its power consumption is much lower than the TN LCD or STN LCD. Table 1 summarizes the calculated battery time of a video graphics array (VGA), 6.3-inch diagonal full color display for different display technologies. Obviously, the cholesteric display offers a

significant power saving over the STN and active matrix TFT LCDs. When considering an average reading time of one minute per page, the cholesteric LCD of the present invention provides more than 370 additional hours of display time between battery recharges when compared to a bistable reflective cholesteric display with passive matrix addressing.

Table 1. Calculated battery life of a VGA, 6.3-inch diagonal full color display in terms of the battery is 5.4 Watt-hours lifetime or operating time between battery recharges for different display technologies.

Display Technologies	Time Between Recharges for Various Average Reading Times		
	1 min/page	2 min/page	5 min/page
Refreshed type display with backlight such as an STN or Active Matrix TN.	2hrs	2hrs	2hrs
Refreshed type reflective display with smart electronics.	18hrs	18hrs	18hrs
Bistable reflective Cholesteric display passive matrix addressing.	270hrs	540hrs	1350hrs
Bistable reflective Cholesteric display active matrix addressing 50% pixel change.	640hrs	1280hrs	3200hrs

Various prior art references related to transfective cholesteric displays are found. The two published papers are: 1. International Display Workshop (2001), p.129, by Yuzo Hisatake et al, (Toshiba), and 2. SID'00, p.742, by Rob van Asselt et al (Philips). The device structures are shown in Figs. 4(a) through Fig. 4(f), respectively. The display device from Philips includes a polarizer **40**, a retardation film **41**, a non-twist LC layer **42a** (with voltage off) and **42b** (with voltage on), a cholesteric translector **43** and absorption layer **44**. In reflective mode, when no voltage is applied, a bright state will occur as shown in Fig. 4(a); while under applied voltage, as shown in Fig. 4 (b), the phase retardation of non-twist LC layer **42b** changes half-wave. Therefore, the circularly polarized light changes twist sense accordingly and passes through the cholesteric

transflector **43** and is finally absorbed by the absorption layer **44**, resulting in a dark state. Fig. 4(c) shows the normally white image **45a** in reflective mode. In transmissive mode, when no voltage is applied, non-twist LC layer **48a** remains flat, no light can pass through polarizer **46** and a dark state occurs, as shown in Fig. 4(d). Under applied voltage, as
5 shown in Fig. 4(e), the linearly polarized light changes 90° since phase retardation of non-twist LC layer **48b** changes half-wave, therefore the linearly polarized light passes through polarizer **46**, resulting in a bright state. Fig. 4(f) shows the normally black image **45b** in transmissive mode. The major difference between Philips' display and previous cholesteric displays, as shown in Figs. 1(a) and 1(b), is that in Philips' display, the cholesteric layer is
10 used as a transfective reflector, no voltage is applied to switch the cholesteric layer. In previous cholesteric display references, the cholesteric layer is used as a light switch.

Three issued patents are found related to the full color cholesteric displays. The first one is U.S. Patent 6,377,321 in which a full color cholesteric display was fabricated by stacking three cells of primary RGB (Red, Green and Blue) colors. See Fig. 5(a). The
15 second is U.S. Patent 6,061,107 in which different UV intensity is used to generate RGB pixels with different pitch lengths (Fig. 5(b)), and the third is U.S. Patent 5,949,513 in which different twist agents are used to generate RGB color pixels (Fig. 5(c)).

In the panel stacking system **50** as shown in Fig. 5(a), parallax problems will occur because of the reflective image from three different stacking layers when viewed from an
20 oblique direction. This parallax would greatly limit the device resolution. To reduce parallax, the substrate thickness has to be reduced to less than 0.3mm, which can only be achievable by using plastic substrates. Additionally, pixel registration is another concern. These additional steps will undoubtedly increase the fabrication time and cost. Fig. 5(b) shows the prior art using different UV intensity **51** to generate red, green, blue (RGB)

pitch lengths. The three primary color pixels need to be cured by different UV intensity.

This is a rather complicated process and cannot be done in a single mask. Fig. 5(c) shows the method of using different twist agent doping. As the drawing shows, there is a need for wells 52, 53, 54, 55 in order to separate three primary color regions and to deposit

5 two different twist agents 56, 57.

A common drawback of the above-mentioned prior art devices is that they are reflective displays, i.e., they need ambient light to read the displayed information contents. In a dark ambient, these displays are not readable. Even if it can achieve a transfective display, the contrast ratio at reflective mode and transmissive mode is reversed, which will
10 actually decrease the contrast ratio if both modes work simultaneously.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A primary objective of the present invention is to provide full color cholesteric displays using high birefringence LC (liquid crystal) materials using conventional color
15 filtering processes which are more compatible with conventional fabrication processes.

The second objective of the present invention is to provide full color cholesteric displays which can display same color images both in reflective and transmissive modes and maintain good readability in any ambient.

The third objective of the present invention is to provide full color cholesteric
20 displays that consume much less power than other LCDs.

The fourth objective of this invention is to provide full color cholesteric displays having a high brightness that does not require any polarizer, where its light efficiency is superior to existing transfective full color STN and TFT-LCDs.

The fifth objective of the present invention is to provide full color cholesteric displays having a wide bandwidth.

The sixth objective of the present invention is to provide full color cholesteric displays having a full color display that can be easily achieved by coating the color filters.

5 The seventh objective of the present invention is to provide full color cholesteric displays that are compatible with conventional STN and TN LCDs where a full color transfective cholesteric display can be fabricated by using wide band cholesteric liquid crystal, coating slant reflector and color filters on the backside of top glass. The fabrication processes are similar to those of STN and TN LCDs.

10 The present invention provides a full color cholesteric display by using high birefringence LC material with conventional color filter process, as shown in Fig. 6(a) and Fig. 6(b), which is much more compatible with conventional fabrications and can be done easily. Fig. 6(a) is a perspective view of a wide band reflective cholesteric LC cell 60 of the present invention with conventional color filters 61, 62, 63. Fig. 6(b) is a cross-
15 sectional view of a wide band LC cell of the present invention showing the cholesteric LC molecules 64 aligned parallel between a bottom substrate 65 and a top substrate 66 having color filter layer 67 interposed between the top substrate and the cholesteric LC molecules 64. Moreover, a pixel is split into reflective and transmissive sub-pixels, as explained in more detail below. Under bright ambient, the backlight is not needed and the display
20 behaves like a reflection type. However, at dark ambient, the backlight is turned on and the display acts as a transmission type. This transfective display is not limited by the environment conditions.

Further objects and advantages of this invention will be apparent from the following detailed description of a presently preferred embodiment, which is illustrated, schematically in the accompanying drawings.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Fig. 1(a) shows a prior art view of a cholesteric display with a Bright state, voltage off.

Fig. 1(b) shows a prior art view of a cholesteric display with a Dark state, voltage on.

Fig. 2 shows a prior art schematic view of a transflective display with single cell gap.

10 Fig. 3(a) is a prior art transflective cholesteric display with voltage off (bright state).

Fig. 3(b) is a prior art transflective cholesteric display with voltage on (dark state).

Fig. 4(a) is a prior art view of a transflective cholesteric display by using cholesteric layer as a transflector, voltage off.

15 Fig. 4(b) is a prior art view of a transflective cholesteric display by using cholesteric layer as a transflector, voltage on.

Fig. 4(c) is a prior art reflective mode image of a transflective cholesteric display.

Fig. 4(d) is a prior art view of a transflective cholesteric display by using cholesteric layer as a transflector, voltage off.

20 Fig. 4(e) is a prior art view of a transflective cholesteric display by using cholesteric layer as a transflector, voltage on.

Fig. 4(f) is a prior art transmissive mode image of a transflective cholesteric display.

Fig. 5(a) is a prior art cross-sectional view of stacking cells in full color cholesteric displays.

Fig. 5(b) is a prior art cross-sectional view of different UV intensity curing in full color cholesteric displays.

Fig. 5(c) is a prior art perspective view of different twist agent deposits in full color cholesteric displays.

- 5 Fig. 6(a) shows a perspective view of full cholesteric display of the present invention using a wide band reflective cholesteric LC cell with conventional color filter processes.

Fig. 6(b) shows a cross-sectional view of Fig. 6(a).

Fig. 7(a) is a schematic plot of the novel full color transflective cholesteric LCD with slant front reflector and wide band reflective cholesteric LC.

- 10 Fig. 7(b) is a cross-sectional view of Fig. 7(a).

Fig. 8(a) is a side view of the novel full color transflective cholesteric LCD with slant front reflector and broadband cholesteric LC in a bright state.

Fig. 8(b) is a side view of the novel full color transflective cholesteric LCD with slant front reflector and broadband cholesteric LC in a dark state.

- 15 Fig. 9(a) shows a perspective view of a narrow band transflective cholesteric display.

Fig. 9(b) shows a cross-sectional view of Fig. 9(a).

Fig. 10 shows the computer simulation results of the birefringence dependent reflection bandwidth of a cholesteric display.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Before explaining the disclosed embodiments of the present invention in detail it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of the

particular arrangements shown since the invention is capable of other embodiments. Also, the terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and not of limitation.

The invention provides a new device structure for the full color transfective cholesteric liquid crystal display (LCD). The novelties are twofold. 1. Each pixel is
5 divided into reflective and transmissive portions. In the transmissive portion, a slant reflector is in position to reflect the backlight into the reflection pixels. This slant reflector design works equally well for both narrow and broad band cholesteric displays. 2. To achieve full color display, high birefringence LC materials are used to achieve black and white displays and implement RGB color filters. The perspective view in Fig. 7(a) and
10 cross-sectional view in Fig. 7(b) show one embodiment of this novel structure. The front slant reflectors **70, 71** are implemented on the same substrate as the color filters **72, 73, 74**. The slant reflectors **70, 71** are right above the transmissive sub-pixels **75, 76** so that they reflect the backlight into reflective region. The absorption layer **77** can be black paint or black dye, as used in the prior art. The black paint or dye absorbs the leaked light and
15 provides a good black state.

Figs. 8 (a) and 8(b) illustrate the operating mechanisms of a right-handed cholesteric (RCH) LC in the novel transfective cholesteric display. In Fig. 8(a), an unpolarized ambient light **180** is incident to the reflective pixels. If the cholesteric layer is right handed so that it reflects the right-hand (R) circularly polarized light **182** and
20 transmits the left-handed (L) part **183**. The transmitted L light is absorbed by the absorption layer **184**. As a result, a bright state is obtained. On the transmission channel from backlight **80**, the R light **86** is reflected back and L **83** is transmitted to hit the slant reflector **85**. Upon reflection, the L light becomes R **82** and is reflected **82A** by the cholesteric LC layer to the viewer. Again, the bright state is observed. Thus, in Fig. 8(a)

the bright state is observed in both the reflective and transmissive portions of the pixel, when the voltage is off. The same bright state for both reflective and transmissive channels is critically important. This is because in a not-too-dark ambient, the backlight may need to be turned on to assist readability.

5 On the other hand, in a high voltage state the cholesteric liquid crystal layer is reoriented to a clear homeotropic state **87**, as shown in Fig. 8(b). Unlike the cholesteric state **81** in Fig. 8(a), the homeotropic state does not selectively reflect or transmit the input polarization. Both the incident ambient **88** and back light **89** are transmitted by the LC layer **87** and absorbed by the absorption layer **184**, which is usually a black paint or
10 black dye. As a result, the dark state appears.

 The reflection bandwidth of a cholesteric LCD is proportional to the birefringence (Δn) and pitch length (P) as $\Delta\lambda = p\Delta n$. If the central reflection wavelength is at $\lambda_o = 550\text{nm}$, a high birefringence LC ($\Delta n \sim 0.5$) would lead to a wide reflection bandwidth. It is one of the objectives of the present invention to achieve a broad reflection band covering the
15 entire visible spectrum, i.e., from 400 to 700nm. Under such condition, a black and white cholesteric display can be realized. Since the reflected light is white, a pattern of the conventional color filters can be made and used to obtain full color displays. The fabrication processes for color filters and slant reflectors are standard in LCD manufacturer.

20 The wide band device with color filters, as shown in Figs. 8(a) and 8(b), preserves a better light efficiency than the STN and TN structures because it does not require a polarizer. Ideally, the B/W cholesteric display has approximately 50% reflectivity. Adding color filters would reduce the light efficiency to 1/3. Thus, for each color pixel, its

light efficiency is approximately 16.7%. For a single polarizer-based TFT-LCD, the polarizer alone cut the light efficiency to approximately 37%. With color filters (30%) and TFT aperture ratio (80%), the net light efficiency is further reduced to approximately 9%. Without a polarizer, the device will exhibit a brighter image.

5 Several novel features of such transfective cholesteric LCD have been identified. First, the LCD can display the same color image in any ambient. The conventional reflective cholesteric displays are not readable in dark ambient. Some prior art applications have used the cholesteric layer as a translector to display the image in dark ambient. However, it exhibits an inverse color image, as the photos shown in Figs. 4(c)
10 and 4(f). The present invention can display the same color images in both reflective and transmissive modes and maintain good readability in any ambient. Both the ambient light and the backlight pass through the color filters twice; therefore, the displays in the present invention have the same color saturation.

 Second, the LCD of the present invention has low power consumption. The
15 low power consumption is due to the bistable or multi-stable characteristic of cholesteric liquid crystal. As Table 1 shows, the cholesteric display consumes much less power than other LCDs developed so far.

 A third attribute of the novel LCD is a high brightness. The present invention does not require any polarizers. Therefore, its light efficiency is superior to existing
20 transfective full color STN and TFT-LCDs.

 A fourth attribute of the LCD of the present invention is the wide bandwidth. The cholesteric display can reflect white light if a high birefringence material is used. If no color filters are used, the proposed device has a high brightness black and white display.

Fifth, the novel LCD can easily provide a full color display. By using wide band reflective cholesteric liquid crystal, a full color display can be easily achieved by coating the color filters.

The sixth advantage of the present invention is that the process of fabrication is
5 compatible with conventional LCD fabrication. A full color transflective cholesteric display can be fabricated by using wide band cholesteric liquid crystal, coating slant reflector and color filters on the backside of the top substrate, usually made of glass. The fabrication processes are compatible with conventional STN and TN LCDs.

The seventh advantage is related to the single cell gap used for both reflective and
10 transmissive displays. Due to the same cell gap, the driving voltage and response time for the reflective and transmissive displays are the same.

Example 1 –Narrow band color cholesteric display.

The front slant reflector concept can apply to both narrow and broadband full
15 color cholesteric LCDs. The major difference is in the LC birefringence employed. As Figs. 9(a) and 9(b) show, the front slant reflectors **101, 102** are deposited on the backside of the top substrate. The slant reflectors are positioned right above the transmissive pixels **103, 104**. Fig. 9(a) is a perspective view of the narrow band color cholesteric display and Fig. 9(b) is a cross-sectional view of 9(a). Unlike the conventional cholesteric LC display,
20 our transflective display can be used in any ambient conditions. Without using color filters, the display will have excellent light efficiency. However, it is a single color display wherein the bandwidth is determined by the pitch length and birefringence product,
$$\Delta\lambda=p\Delta n.$$

Example 2 –Wide band cholesteric liquid crystal simulation.

Fig.10 shows the computer simulation results of the reflectance of right-hand circular polarization (RCP) mode for unpolarized input with right hand LC. The graph plots the birefringence dependent reflection bandwidth of a cholesteric display. The Δn values used for calculations are 0.2, 0.6 and 1.0, shown as dash, -plus and solid lines, respectively. Obviously, when the birefringence is larger than 0.6, the reflection bandwidth covers almost the entire visible spectrum. The maximum reflectivity reaches 50%.

While the invention has been described, disclosed, illustrated and shown in various terms of certain embodiments or modifications which it has presumed in practice, the scope of the invention is not intended to be, nor should it be deemed to be, limited thereby and such other modifications or embodiments as may be suggested by the teachings herein are particularly reserved especially as they fall within the breadth and scope of the claims here appended.

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